

Delta Session DS 6: Vietnam / Mekong Delta

Chair Dr. Raimond Hafkenscheid, Cooperative Programme on Water and Climate (CPWC)

Presentation 1:

Prof. Tran Thuc, director Vietnam Institute for Meteorology, Hydrology, and Environment (IMHEN):

- Current status of climate change in Vietnam, including the climate scenario's (rainfall events, drizzle days, sea level rise);
- National Target Programme to respond to climate change (2011-2015 implementation phase);
- Difficulties implementation: poor awareness, weak condition for mainstreaming, lack of tools for methodologies for policy development;
- The main priority is awareness raising on climate change and adaptation, aiming at a 100% coverage amongst policy makers by 2015;
- Mainstreaming overload (too many top priority issues pressed by external parties) causes stagnation in policy development.

Q &A:

Q: Are there scenarios available and are they sufficient?

A: There is a 6 months upgrade, but limitations are that scenarios are not applicable on local level (spatial resolution insufficient).

Q: What do you undertake to raise awareness among inhabitants of HCMC?

A: IMHEM uses the tools from described in the Target programme, the targets for civil servants will be reached but we know that people in urban areas are difficult to reach. And it is there where a lot of adaptation experience is concentrated! The GoV recognizes the importance of this local knowledge.

Q: What is the mandate of IMHEM to formulate strategies?

A: IMHEM is doing research and develop guidelines for actions plans, under the responsibility of MoNRE.

Nguyen Ngoc Anh, director of the Southern Institute for Water Resources Planning presents:

- Master plan on Water Resources development in the Mekong
- Background information (facts & figures) Mekong Delta

Q&A

Q: Have you conducted financial studies towards the costs of implementing policies on climate adaptation in the Mekong delta?

A: They still need time to do more studies, but approximate estimation to execute the Climate Adaptation Master Plan is 10 billion USD

Paul Rabé, secretary for the Pacific Rim Forum on Urban Development (PRFUD) presents:

- Background en set up of Pacific Rim Council for Urban Development.
- Round table event: look at flooding challenge in HCMC and regional context
 - Focus on planned new harbor / housing area and redevelopment district 6 in HCMC.
- Recommendations for both areas , with emphasis on the challenges related to 180.000 people housing area net to the new harbor. Soil characteristics and flooding make it very costly to develop housing, more holistic planning is required.
- For district 6 climate adaptation measures can only be implemented structurally with total redevelopment of the area, including its economic activities.

Q&A

Q: Considering that already a lot of studies and recommendations have been conducted, Rotterdam has started a cooperation with HCMC to assist on and integrated climate change strategy. Where should Rotterdam start?

A: There is no lack of planning or technical assistant reports, but HCMC has difficulties of implementing the plans, or find a way to interlink / connect the separate masterplans and reports. A total holistic viewpoint is lacking.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Franscesca Bernadini (UNECE guidance) states that a transboundary approach for guidance is relevant. The government of Vietnam is invited to start an exercise with the EU project to share experience on this topic, and the UNECE is willing to assist.

Peter Kerssens (Deltares) replies that he is curious what the role of China is in the Mekong. In his opinion the Chinese receive all the data and information because they are observers in the MRC, but they have no obligations in providing data themselves. Activities related to information exchange / collection / validation and distribution will have to increase drastically over the coming years.

Jeremy Bird (CEO MRC) reflects that China is indeed an observer, but that China is also a dialogue partner and that there is an exchange of information between the modeling teams. It is not yet an optimal situation, but far better than years ago.

Rohit Aggarwala (advisor C40 cities affairs) HCMC is facing great achievements for today. Use the Connecting Deltas cities network and peer to peer connection between city officials. Mayors will take strategic advice from other mayors, and officials from officials.

Chris Zevenbergen (Dura Vermeer) thinks that it is possible to involve the private sector when cities come up with good plans. He wonders whether it is possible for HCMC to have involvement of Chinese investors, like in Rotterdam. Arnoud Molenaar replies that this would be possible.

Viet Hoang (WWF Vietnam) reflect on green adaptation strategies. 70/80% of the people in the Mekong Delta live in rural areas and are heavily dependent on the national resources. People cannot benefit from the ecosystem with technical structures, like what happened in District 7. A Singapore project changed the area from mangrove to an urban area. Water(run off) is not able to be absorbed which causes large floods. The delta dynamics must be maintained!

Lies Janssen, Netherlands Water Partnership, asks if policy makers in the Mekong delta look at the lessons learned like New Orleans.

Arjen Berkhuisen replies that Marcel Stive has concluded that the biggest lessons learned are that once you interfere, there is no way back. When you have destroyed the ecosystem it is too expensive to turn in back into the old system. That is why economic value studies needs to be done and natural dynamics must be safeguarded..

Rob Verheem, MER Commissie, explains that Strategic Environmental Assessment are already a key tool for the Vietnamese government that they are going to apply in there efforts to implement policies related to water resources and climate adaptation. There are two important needs:

- 1) get the data right;
- 2) make sure that data is mainstreamed into social society.

SEA is legal mandatory within strategic decision making in Viet Nam on national and local level. But, there is a need for local capacity. That is why a support programme is started with assistance of the Dutch Embassy in Hanoi.

This programme will:

- o Develop technical guidance how to apply SEA in case of policy development vor Water resources management and climate change
- o Create awareness how to deal with Climate Change
- o Field test this guidance in the Mekong provinces

Relevance for international exchange is extremely important. CEI MER is willing to assist in this.

Lies Janssen: Could SEA be an instrument to break through the thematic silos that appear to be present?

Rob Verheem: SEA can contribute but cannot solve this problem, but can help to team up with other approaches.

Vice Minister dr. Nguyen Thai Lai (MoNRE) closes the session:

- All comments are very relevant for Vietnam, not only in the Mekong delta but also for the Red River delta in the North.
- Vietnam is dealing with uncertainties and would like to cooperate with others to tackle the problems. The strategic partnership arrangement that has been signed by the prime ministers of the Netherlands and Vietnam is an excellent example.
- Good data is important for adequate scenarios, without proper data on climate and water resources we are blind!
- Do not rush: if changes are made, make them right! Flexible approaches, and no regret measures towards climate change are required.
- Everybody is welcome to Vietnam to help us but..... if you all do not work together you only create much more problems for us! Coordination needs to take place, and organizations have to look beyond their own individual objectives.
- The government is very much in favor of organizing a conference like this one, to exchange the views, as long as they really add to further cooperation.